

Trooper Robert J. "Bob" Kolilis

Badge #353
10-42 ... September 21, 1988

The 59th Recruit Class reported for duty at the Patrol's Law Enforcement Academy on July 5, 1987. The 30 members of the class had participated in an extensive testing process in which 4,000 people had applied. It was during the testing that I first met Bob Kolilis. He was a poster child for the Highway Patrol, and it was obvious he had an outstanding chance of being selected to fill one of the vacancies. I was fortunate to be selected as a member of the 59th Recruit Class, and was not surprised to find Bob there when I arrived.

It took a while for me to get to know Bob. Most of our free time was spent learning how to do things the Highway Patrol way. We were not sure it was acceptable to speak to one another during idle time, and the fear of being caught by Sergeant Porter kept us busy with other tasks. Eventually, things got easier and we were given privileges. This meant we were allowed to play pool, basketball, or go to the training tank. It was during these times that I really got to know Bob.

Bob was one of the most honest individuals I have ever met. On one occasion, while at PT, the whole class started laughing. Corporal Phil Tinsley did not think it was too funny, and asked for anyone who thought the matter was funny to raise his

hand. I can still see the stunned look on Bob's face as he raised his hand and turned to see that he was the only one who thought the matter was funny. It took him several trips to the medicinal corner to see the light.

Bob was extremely intelligent, and well liked by everyone with whom he came into contact. He was also very athletic, even though he took a lot of grief for his unique, bowed-leg running style. Bob never backed away from a challenge—even when the cards were stacked against him. He was not a gifted basketball player and, like myself, lacked any leaping ability whatsoever. But, he was always up for a game.

Many an evening was spent being abused under the basket by the likes of Scott Cummings, William Bates, Wade Howell, Jeff Smith, Roger Whittler, and Blaine Adams. If he was not under the boards he was valiantly attempting to cover Larry Clark, which just was not possible. Although the games were oftentimes one sided, Bob never complained. He truly enjoyed the camaraderie and the friendship.

When Bob could not get us to play basketball he would recommend a game of dodge ball in the training tank. An awful lot of frustration was taken out in the pool, especially on the basketball players who could not swim very well.

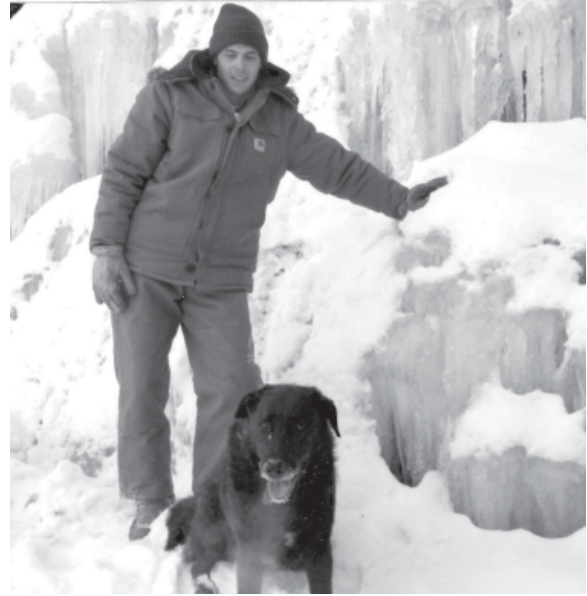
Bob had a good sense of humor and did not mind being the butt of a joke. Retired Captain Corbin saw him at his barbershop one day and from that day forward Bob



Bob and Carol Kolilis are pictured on their wedding day, 1986.

could do no wrong in his eyes. Capt. Corbin would make a point to commend Bob at the morning line inspection. From that point on Bob was affectionately called "Special K" by the class. As popular as Bob was with Capt. Corbin, he was equally unpopular with Lt. Williams. Lt. Williams would sit in the lunchroom and await our arrival at mealtime. Lt. Williams would make it a point to let Bob know how poor his facing movements were. Bob really appreciated the criticism and his facial expressions were priceless. I made it a point to tease him when we left.

Bob never passed up on a chance to get even and boxing afforded him that opportunity. I somehow was matched up with Jeff Smith. Jeff landed about 20 lucky punches to my face and added a



Bob Kollis with his dog, Mickey, at a frozen waterfall in Loose Creek, MO.

nice shade of red to my blue and white t-shirt. My lips were swelled up to about three times their normal size. I remember Bob being concerned when he first saw my face. But, his concern quickly changed to laughter when he realized that I was not seriously injured.

Bob excelled while at the Academy. He was a great marksman, strong academically and physically, and was recognized as one of the class leaders. He had a great personality and always seemed to light up the room. He had a positive attitude and was always willing to offer support. Bob was probably the most well rounded member of the 59th Recruit Class.

Bob made the Academy a better place to be and helped pass the days. It was the longest six months of my life, but I can honestly say that some of my best days were spent there. We graduated from the Academy on December 10, 1987. Bob's father Gus (a former St. Louis police officer) was there to congratulate him. It was one of Bob's proudest moments.

Bob was assigned to the Troop C satellite after graduation. I was also sent to

Troop C, but was assigned to Pike County. We were at opposite ends of the troop and rarely saw one another. We often talked on the telephone, and he could not have been happier. He was married to his loving, devoted wife, Carol, and had his dream job. He had a bright future ahead of him.

September 21, 1988, started like every other day. Bob was out working traffic and stopped a vehicle on a two-lane road. He was talking to the violators when he was struck and killed by a passing motorist. That day will long be remembered for those who knew and loved Bob. He was a great friend, son, and devoted husband. He will never be forgotten.

A young Bob, enjoying target practice on a farm in Boone County. He grew up around police officers. He's about 12 years old in this picture, and proudly wears his St. Louis Police Academy ball cap.

(Sgt. Norman A. Murphy, Troop C, wrote this article in 2005, for this 75th anniversary project.

Trooper Robert J. "Bob" Kolilis, 24, died September 21, 1988, as a result of injuries sustained when he was struck by a pickup truck on Highway M in Washington County. Tpr. Kolilis was standing near the center of the highway at the time he was struck. The trooper had stopped to inquire why one of two vehicles was parked partially on the highway. Tpr. Kolilis was survived by his wife, Carol, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gus Kolilis.)



Bob, Sally, and Gus Kolilis enjoyed spending time together on their Loose Creek farm. At the time of this photo in 1983, Bob was working part time at the Missouri State Highway Patrol in the radio shop and attending Lincoln University. (Notice his SLPD cap.)